Secrets and Lies

Liane Moriarty’s Big Little Lies is burning up the charts. Fans of Moriarty’s smart, suspenseful women’s fiction may enjoy these other engaging domestic dramas.

THE STEPMOTHER by Carrie Adams
F ADA
Tessa King (heroine of Adams's first novel) has finally nabbed hers: James, an older man with three charming daughters from a previous marriage. These daughters—including daddy’s girl extraordinaire, 14-year-old Amber—don’t seem so lovely once stepmother-in-waiting Tessa has to deal with their dirty school uniforms and petty jealousies. Nor did Tessa sign up for the emotional baggage of James’s ex-wife, Bea, who broke James’s heart. With all the angst, how’s a girl supposed to plan the perfect white wedding? Meanwhile, Bea—who shares narration duty—still has a torch burning for James and has buried years of regret and guilt under binge eating and, soon, compulsive drinking. Family dramas and crises bring Bea and Tessa together with surprising results. Particularly refreshing are Tessa’s and Bea’s co-starring roles, which allows Adams to explore in sometimes painful detail how the real work begins once you’ve got the diamond ring. – Publishers Weekly

TARA ROAD by Maeve Binchy
F BIN, LARGE PRINT, CD AUDIOBOOK
When Danny Lynch and his young bride-to-be Ria Norris buy No. 16, a large, derelict Victorian house, Tara Road is a rundown Dublin street. Lovingly restored, the house soon becomes a gathering place as neighbors stop by to chat, help out, or eat one of Ria’s delicious meals. Ria has loved handsome Danny since first meeting him. She enjoys managing her busy domestic life and two children, Annie and Brian. But the summer when Annie is fourteen and Brian nine, Ria learns that Danny has been dallying with a “fancy woman,” now pregnant with his child, and that he wants to marry her. Stunned, Ria impulsively accepts an American woman’s surprise telephone request to trade houses for the summer. Marilyn, living in New England, is married but still mourning the death of her teenaged son, Dale, and covets time alone. Once ensconced in her Connecticut home, Ria soon makes new friends, finds work as a caterer, and even begins dating while also learning the truth about Dale’s death. Meanwhile, in Dublin, Ria's pals continue to drop in, at first overwhelming Marilyn, who gradually involves herself in their lives, grows a garden, and discovers one friend’s unsuspected betrayal of Ria. The two women, each strengthened by her season abroad, meet briefly before Marilyn flies home. Grateful for one another's support, each feels less heart-sore and more hopeful of happiness ahead. One of Binchy’s best. – Kirkus Reviews

Compiled by Booklist 2016
THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR by Barbara Delinsky
F DEL
The woman next door is young, attractive, widowed, and pregnant. Since the neighboring ladies know that she keeps to herself and doesn’t receive visitors, they naturally wonder: ”Could my husband be the father?” Delinsky’s latest novel is like a murder mystery, with clues and even red herrings thrown in along the way, but Delinsky surprises the reader in the end. Her plot concerns the personal problems of the three close couples who live on the widow’s cul-de-sac, focusing mainly on Amanda and Graham. Every detail of their own baby quest is noted, including fertility treatments and the dissension with Graham’s baby-demanding family. Amanda’s job as a school counselor is highlighted, especially when a teenager commits suicide at school. Will Amanda have a baby of her own? And will the father of her neighbor’s baby make himself known?
– Library Journal

FIREFLY LANE by Kristin Hannah
F HAN, LARGE PRINT, CD AUDIOBOOK
When Kate first sees Tully as she’s waiting for the bus to take her to her first day at a new school, Kate thinks Tully’s the coolest girl in the world. Kate is a shy, insecure rule follower, and Tully helps her to come out of her shell and take chances. Both girls need a best friend, and the bond they form is strong enough to last a lifetime. Hannah explores a friendship that spans three decades and the different paths Kate and Tully take. Tully’s ambition to be a journalist brings her all the way to network anchor and beyond, while Kate finds love with a man who first had been smitten with Tully. The women have their problems over the years, stemming from Kate’s insecurities and Tully’s willingness to sacrifice anything for her career, but in the end their friendship endures when it matters. Hannah captures the feeling of the 1970s and 1980s, exploring some serious issues as well. – Library Journal

YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN by Jean Hanff Korelitz
F KOR, CD AUDIOBOOK
A successful therapist with her new book, You Should Have Known, due to be published in weeks, Grace is living a life to envy: she’s married to an oncologist who loves her, has a son who adores her, and lives in a great apartment in Manhattan. Her son, Henry, attends an exclusive private school, which is in the midst of an annual fundraiser. Grace attends a planning meeting with several moms she already knows plus a new member, Malaga. Imagine the moms’ shock when a few days after the meeting, Malaga is found brutally murdered in her apartment. The police question everyone on the planning committee but return to talk to Grace several times. And thus begins the end of what Grace thought was a normal life. – Library Journal
LITTLE CHILDREN by Tom Perrotta
F PER
A penetrating and absorbing portrait of three suburban couples and their failed marriages. There's Sarah, who was a bisexual feminist in college but has now married Richard, 20 years her senior, to escape a dead-end job; Todd, a handsome, stay-at-home dad who can't bring himself to care about repeatedly failing the bar exam; and Larry, a former cop who retired at 33 after mistakenly killing a 13-year-old boy. All of their lives collide with unexpected consequences the summer a convicted child molester moves into the neighborhood. Sarah and Todd have an extended affair, and Larry becomes obsessed with harassing the sex offender, while Richard turns into a devoted member of the online “Slutty Kay” fan club. Perrotta's poignant and unflinching prose skillfully evokes both sympathy for his characters and disdain for the convenience they have chosen. – Library Journal

MY SISTER’S KEEPER by Jodi Picoult
Y FIC PIC
Imagine that you were conceived to be the donor of bone marrow and platelets for your older sister, who has a rare form of cancer. Imagine what it would be like to grow up in a family where everyone is constantly aware of one child's deadly illness, so that all decisions must be filtered through what will work for her treatment or her most recent medical emergency. How can a 12-year-old decide against donating a kidney to her older sister? By having this story narrated by each character in turn, Picoult shows readers the dilemmas facing everyone involved: from Anna, the child who sues her parents for medical emancipation; to Sara, the mother who loves all three of her children but must devote continual attention to the daughter with cancer; and to Jesse, the son who has abandoned hope of ever being noticed by his parents. Picoult's timely and compelling novel will appeal to anyone who has thought about the morality of medical decision making and any parent who must balance the needs of different children. – Library Journal

Compiled by Booklist 2016
THE SLAP by Christos Tsiolkas
F TSI
This astute exploration of suburban aspirations and failings, winner of the Commonwealth Prize and Tsiolkas's first novel to be published in the U.S., opens at a barbecue in Melbourne, Australia, where nearly two dozen characters are introduced in the opening vignette. The reader barely has time to absorb their names and relationships before the pivotal event occurs: a man, Harry, slaps a bratty child who is threatening his son. At the center of the altercation are Hector, Harry's cousin, and Hector's wife, Aisha, who is friends with Rosie, the mother of the boy who's been slapped. When Rosie and her alcoholic husband press charges, longstanding relationships threaten to fall apart. Told from eight perspectives, each of which gets a novella-like chapter, the novel vividly demonstrates the wide-ranging effects of a single moment's rash decision on characters as varied as Harry's 71-year-old uncle and a high school student coming to terms with his sexuality. Beyond simply igniting the plot, the fateful slap draws attention to generational and philosophical differences regarding family life and the complex political, social, and ethnic milieu of contemporary Australia. – Publishers Weekly

BEST FRIENDS FOREVER by Jennifer Weiner
F WEI, LARGE PRINT, CD AUDIOBOOK, HOOPLA AUDIOBOOK
Addie has always been a good girl—especially compared with her freewheeling and far-more-popular friend, Valerie. When jock Dan Swansea sexually assaults Valerie, Addie comes to her rescue, only to be betrayed and humiliated when Valerie denies everything. Fifteen years later, on the night of their high school reunion, Valerie tries to make things right, only to end up turning their worlds upside down. In her revenge attempt on Dan, she runs him over with her car and leaves him for dead. Once again she turns to Addie for help, and the two set off on a run from the law. Verdict Weiner's latest showcases her talent for creating richly drawn, realistic characters. She deftly weaves in multiple back stories and subplots and punctuates the story with plenty of humor. – Library Journal